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"WOMEN'S LANGUAGES"

THE literature relating to "women's languages" among primitive peoples, and the theories as to their origin and significance, are pretty well cited and discussed in the section "Frauensprachen" (pp. 7–13) of Dr Richard Lasch's recent monograph on *Separate Languages*.[1] Dr Lasch points out the insufficiency of the older theories, particularly that offered by Bréton in his *Carib Dictionary*, published in 1664, viz., that the existence of a women's language in Dominica was due to the fact of the incorporation by the Caribs of women belonging to foreign tribes, who were saved when the male members were exterminated. These women preserved and handed down from generation to generation of their sex remnants, for example, of the Arawak speech of their ancestors. This view was adopted by Humboldt, Waitz, and others. Some other social *motif* than wife-stealing, or the capture of women, must be looked for at the source of "women's languages". Sapper,[2] in 1897, sought to explain these differences between the speech of men and women as due to the social-economic factor of differentiation of occupation and labor, leading naturally to such diverse appellations of one and the same thing, etc. This view is adopted by Dr Lasch, who points out that the bulk of "women's words, phrases, etc.," as compared with the mass of the language spoken in common by the two sexes, is not so great as some have supposed, relying on the statement of earlier writers concerning the Caribs of the West Indies. Religious and animistic concepts in woman's sphere of thought may also have had some influence here; likewise the play-instinct, which often makes itself felt longer in woman. Taboos of naming also have a rôle in the production of the speech-diversities in question. Lasch mentions, too, the theory of Frazer, who seeks to explain the origin of gender in language by connecting the masculine and the feminine nouns, respectively, with the "men's" or the "women's" languages.

Since Lasch's monograph the most important addition to the literature of the subject is contained in the linguistic material of the Carayan stock published by Dr Fritz Krause[3] in his book on the Araguaya country of Brazil. The Caraya have long been known as one of the Indian people among whom a "woman's language" existed. Ehrenreich,[4] in

[1] *Mitt. d. Anthr. Ges. in Wien*, Bd. 37, 1907.

[2] See *Internat. Archiv für Ethnogr.*, vol. x, 1897, p. 571.

[3] *In den Wildnissen Brasiliens, Bericht und Ergebnisse der Leipziger Araguaya-Expedition 1908*, Leipzig, 1912. See pp. 60, 343–344, 416–457.

[4] See *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. XXVI, 1894, pp. 20–24.

his article on the Caraya language, has something to say on the subject and gives a vocabulary. The investigation of this "woman's language" was one of the problems which the author set himself. Dr Krause was successful in obtaining a large number of "women's words" (those given in the vocabulary, with variants, exceed two hundred). Those in the language of the "northern horde" of the Caraya were obtained from men, those in that of the "southern horde" from women, the latter being probably more exact. The men style the "women's language" *ĭbĭnā'lĭ*, i. e., "very bad," and make jests about it. Ehrenreich, who first demonstrated the existence of a "women's language" among the Caraya, found the chief difference in the speech of the two sexes to consist in the insertion, for example, of a *k* wherever in the language of the men two vowels came together. Thus, the men's word for "rain" is *biū*; the women's, *bikū*. The initial *k* of the women is dropped by the men. Dr Krause confirms this (pp. 60, 343), and cites the jest of the Caraya Indian Pedro, who said one day that Dr Krause's companion, Francisco Adam, "was a woman", because he pronounced the Brazilian word *jacuba* (a kind of drink), not *šăúbă*, as a man would have done, but *šăkúbă* after the fashion of the women. Ehrenreich thought that the "women's language" of the Caraya represented perhaps an older form of the tribal speech retained by them. Krause, who notes the fact that the women pronounce their words better than the men (p. 60), states also (p. 343) that "probably the women's dialect, with its fuller tone, represents an older form of the language." Of the possible origin of the Carayan "woman's language" he observes (p. 343): "Of a distinct language, arisen, for example, through the reception of female captives from foreign tribes, there is no question here. The taking over of foreign women (Tapirapé, Cayapó, Šavajé) is too limited to have enabled their language to have had any such influence, and, moreover, the deviations from the men's language are too small to make it necessary to look for a foreign derivation of the women's language." The character of the Carayan " women's language " will be seen from the following list of words from the language of the " southern horde ":

A. *Words differing but slightly*

ENGLISH	MEN'S LANGUAGE	WOMEN'S LANGUAGE
Head	*ōhŏ'*	*kōhŏ'*
Ear	*nōŏtĭ'*	*nŏhŏdĭ'*
Shoulder	*ăsĭŏtĭ'*	*ăsĭkŏtĭ'*
Star	*dăīnă'*	*dākīnă*

Boy	*ŭālĭlĭ'*	*ŭākĭlĭ'*
Leg-bands	*dēōbŭtă'*	*dĕkōbŭdă'*
Fire	*hāŏtŏ'*	*hākŏ'tĭ*
Raw cotton	*ăsōtă'*	*ăsŏnt'ă'k'*

B. *Words differing considerably*

Neck	*lāhŏ'*	*mādŏ'*
Elbow	*tā(ĕ)hō'*	*dăkŏhŏ'*
Snail-shell	*kūŭhŏ'*	*bădāhŏ*
Six	*lēŭljō'*	*lēkălŏ'lă*
Four	*ĭnămbĭŏ'*	*ĭmăkūbĭkŏ'*
Knife (European)	*mā(h)ŭ*	*māk*

Krause includes in his vocabulary of the Caraya "woman's language" some sixty words from Ehrenreich.

ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN

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